



Seahorse Multimedia Journalist of the Year 2023 winning submission

Bridget Diakun

Multimedia Journalist of the Year

Title: Shadowy trade in 'stolen' grain from Russia-occupied Azov ramps up

Link: <https://www.loydslist.com/LL1146534/Shadowy-trade-in-stolen-grain-from-Russia-occupied-Azov-ramps-up>

EXPORTS from the Russia-occupied ports of Mariupol and Berdiansk are in full swing as the grain harvest gets underway, potentially exposing shippers to Western sanctions risk while revealing those sanctions' limits.

Grain from Russia itself is not sanctioned. But the US, UK and EU prohibit dealing in grain from what Russia calls its "new" territories.

Lloyd's List has found evidence the trade is increasing after a lull in the early months of Russia's invasion, and that supplies are probably being mixed in Azov ports, meaning carriers may be carrying sanctioned cargo.

This leaves Western traders that are trying to minimise sanctions risk potentially exposed, although enforcement would be hard given the trades' complex and opaque nature.

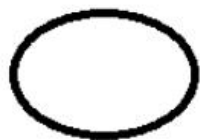
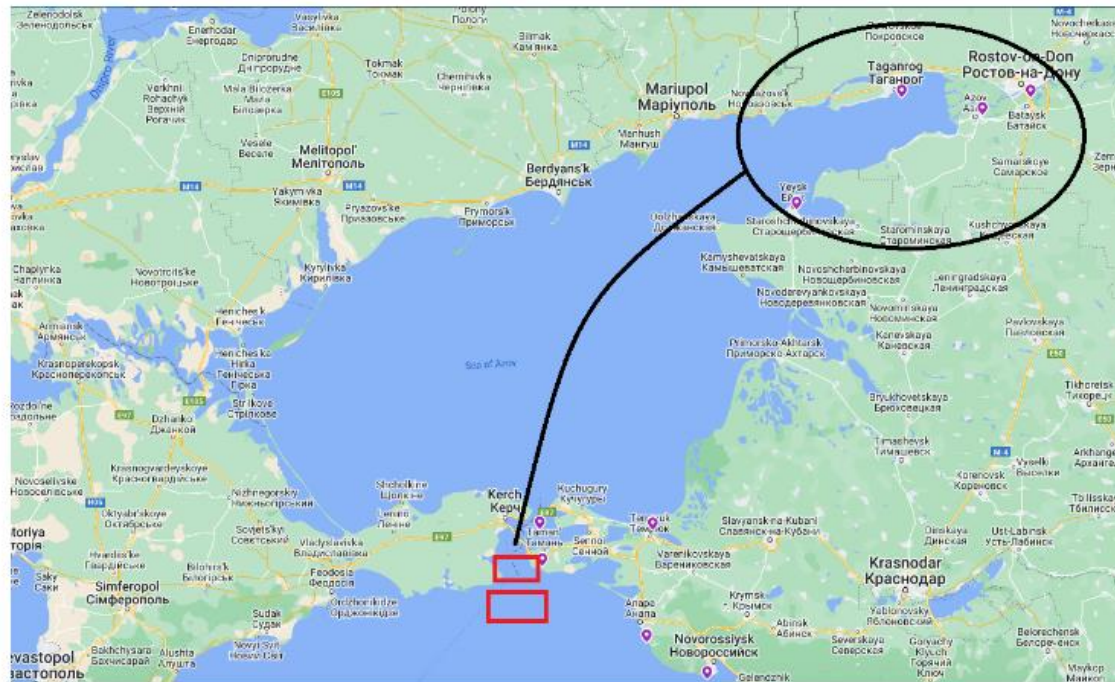
The cargo from Berdiansk and Mariupol is delivered from occupied Ukraine to nearby Russian ports. It is not clear what happens to it after, but Russia has a history of concealing illicit grain operations within its own well-established grain export supply chain.

Previous research indicates that some vessels that load grain in occupied Crimea, mainly its sanctioned port of Sevastopol, travel to the Kavkaz ship-to-ship transfer areas in the Kerch Strait. The cargo is then mixed with grain from Russia through a series of STS transfers, then carried to world markets.

Ukraine and the US decry the exports as looting from the Ukrainian people.

Russia's Sea of Azov supply chain: grain exports

- Smaller vessels load in the Sea of Azov ports before heading south to the ship-to-ship transfer areas in and around the Kerch Strait
- Cargo is transhipped onto other, typically larger, vessels
- These ships transport the grain to foreign markets



Russia's main Sea of Azov ports



Route taken to travel southbound



Ship-to-ship transfer areas

Source: Lloyd's List Intelligence Seasearcher

“The evidence clearly shows that Putin and his cronies have been stealing food and agricultural equipment from Ukraine since the very start of its illegal and unprovoked war of aggression,” a US State Department spokesperson told Lloyd’s List.

“The United States continues to call on countries to avoid purchasing stolen grain from Ukraine and we remain committed to working with our partners to deter and deny benefit to those who profit from stolen grain.”

The US Treasury prohibited the import of products from Ukraine’s “covered regions” including the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic, which Mariupol now falls under, since before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The US has not extended these “covered regions”, but it stipulates the prohibition applies to “such other regions of Ukraine as may be determined by the secretary of treasury, in consultation with the secretary of state.”

It sanctioned several individuals for alleged theft of Ukrainian grain in September, including exporting the grain from the port of Berdiansk, in the Zaporizhzhia region.

The EU and UK have designated both Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia, where the two ports are located, as non-government controlled areas of Ukraine.

The import of cargo originating from non-government controlled areas is strictly prohibited, but similar to US sanctions it does not extend to other countries.

Meanwhile, Russian grain is exempt from sanctions and continues to be traded.

Between February 2022 and June 2023 the EU imported 2.2m tonnes of wheat from Russia, the UK, 41,000 and the US just under 16,000, according to data compiled by the International Grains Council based on import statistics and private seaborne shipping information. Alternative data sources were used given the suspension of Russia’s customs statistics at the beginning of the war.

Grain destined for Europe and the US is exported from the Black Sea and Sea of Azov.

If the same practice employed in Crimea is applied to grain from Mariupol and Berdiansk, it becomes increasingly difficult for shippers and traders in this supply chain to be certain of the origin of the cargo, particularly when it reaches Kavkaz anchorage.

Therefore, as trade in cargo from occupied Ukraine grows, so does the risk to traders trying to comply with either EU, US or UK sanctions.

“There is increasingly less reliable trade data coming from Russia and the statistics and ownership structures are becoming more complex,” said Yörük Işık, a geopolitical analyst from the Istanbul-based consultancy Bosphorus Observer.

He said Russian individuals and entities, both state-run and private, are actively trying to circumvent sanctions.

“Any company or individual doing trade, even if they are doing so from legal Russian ports such as Rostov-on-Don or Taganrog or Novorossiysk and are importing goods that are legal under the current sanctions regime, are risking exposure to sanctions or secondary sanctions,” Işık said.

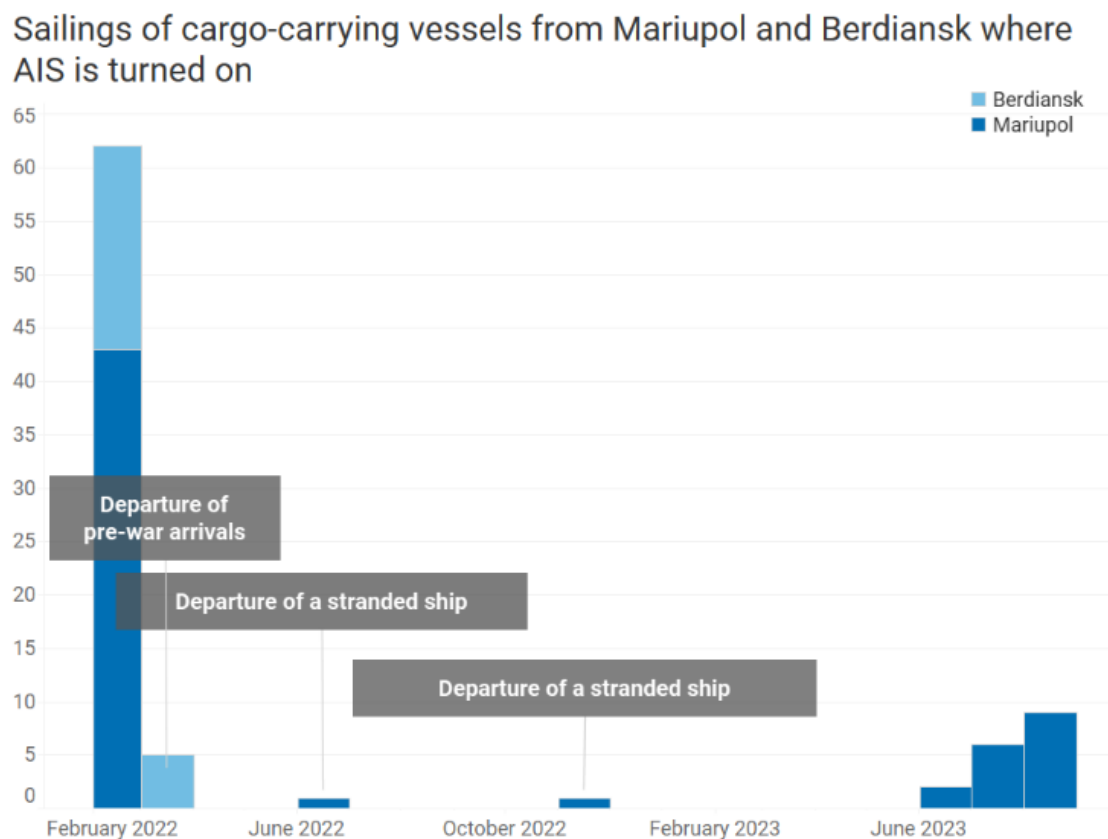
Even if companies are not violating sanctions, the risk of doing so by accident might deter them from trading.

Sanctions lawyer Daniel Martin, a partner at HFW, said: “Some commercial entities may choose not to engage in these activities even if no prohibition applies, in order to not run the risk of issues with insurance, banking relationships, among other things, as well as future charterers undertaking enhanced due diligence on the vessel’s trade.”

The Mariupol route

Last April, Ukraine’s Ministry of Infrastructure ordered to close the ports of Berdiansk and Mariupol, along with Skadovsk and Kherson, until the government could restore control.

But Lloyd’s List Intelligence vessel-tracking showed 19 callings to Mariupol, both with Automatic Identification System on and off, since June 2023.



Source: Lloyd’s List Intelligence. Only vessels suspected of being involved in grain trade included in the 2023 figures



The precise date that the Russians reopened Mariupol and Berdiansk is not known, though preparations were being made mid-2022.

Loading times were thought to be slow and turnover minimal during the early days of operations.

Tracking data indicate the fleet servicing Mariupol has expanded with activity increasing steadily since July. Most of the vessel’s voyages have AIS on for at least part of the trip.

A logistics route between Mariupol and the Russian port of Rostov-on-Don was first announced at the end of April.

Ships deliver building materials from Rostov to Mariupol and return with grain from “the new territories of the Russian Federation”, according to a press release from RosKapSroy, the Russian government-owned company operating the trade lane.

Russia-flagged general cargoship Mezhdurechensk (IMO: 8948167) was the first vessel employed on this route. Since June it was tracked arriving at Mariupol seven times.

It sails from both Rostov-on-Don and Azov and appears to have called at the port on another occasion in June with its AIS off.

Lloyd’s List used AIS positions and satellite imagery to verify these voyages with a high degree of certainty.

According to vessel tracking data, after Mezhdurechensk’s last voyage to Mariupol, the vessel has been travelling between Rostov-on-Don and the Kavkaz STS area.

Mezhdurechensk is not the only vessel with a regular Mariupol route.

A pair of smaller general cargo ships of 1,669 dwt started moving cargo between Mariupol and Russian ports of Azov and Yeysk at the end of July.

STK-1016 (IMO: 8521880) and STK-1003 (IMO: 8326058), both managed by LLC Remote Marine Terminal and operated by the UK-sanctioned Volga Shipping Company, started sailing to Mariupol at the end of July.

Data and satellite images show two ships made about 10 calls to Mariupol, however, Lloyd’s List could not confirm the cargo was unloaded or loaded onto the STK vessels.

An adviser to the Ukrainian Mariupol mayor, Petro Andryushchenko, said that more grain was leaving Mariupol during one of the periods that STK-1016 was docked at port.

“Traffic from the port has increased to a frequency of approximately one ship every three days,” Andryushchenko said.

“It is true that vessels are light tonnage, but the trend is not great.”

STK-1003 and STK-1016 are river-sea vessels designed to carry general cargo, bulk cargo (coal and grain), timber as well as 20-foot containers.

According to LLC Remote Marine Terminal’s website, the company’s business is mainly exporting and transporting timber.

After calling at Mariupol STK-1003 and STK-1016 can be tracked sailing to either Azov or Yeysk.

At Yeysk they dock at a terminal that specializes in the transshipment of grain and other agricultural products.

Before showing up in the Sea of Azov, STK-1003 and STK-1016 had exclusively worked in the northwest region of Russia since at least 2020.

Another historically inland vessel was tracked arriving in Mariupol at the end of June: Russia-flagged 2,170 dwt general cargoship Sokolki (IMO: 8948193) was docked at the port from June 30 to July 18 in the area north of the port’s grain siloes.

Mariupol, July 6, 2023

Loading areas, confirmed with Automatic Identification System, of vessels suspected of being involved in grain export are highlighted



Source: Planet Labs PBC



A vessel of a similar size can be seen in satellite images at the same position that Sokolki's AIS data indicates.

The ship arrived from Rostov-on-Don, signaling the Caspian Sea port of Astrakhan during this voyage.

It sailed directly to Azov afterwards, then to the Kavkaz STS area in the south of the Kerch Strait.

The ship was there for over a month, with its AIS mostly turned off, before returning to the Sea of Azov on September 5.

Sokolki is beneficially owned by the Azov-Don Shipping Company. This entity also owns M.Andreev (IMO: 8946377), which has been identified by other outlets for its involvement in grain exports from Sevastopol.

Russian sources indicate it is no longer just grain being exported from Mariupol.

“The first batch of products from metallurgical enterprises of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics was sent from the port of Mariupol,” said Russia's deputy prime minister for construction and regional development Marat Khusnullin in a press release dated July 31.

The ship employed was not named. However, Lloyd's List understands that RM 3 (IMO: 8877241) regularly delivers building materials to Mariupol.

Since May the vessel has made approximately eight voyages to Mariupol, some with its AIS on and some with it disabled.

The vessel often travels from Sevastopol, but in July it made several voyages between Rostov-on-Don and Mariupol.

Berdiansk activity

It is harder to assess activity at the port of Berdiansk as no cargo-carrying vessels turn on their AIS at the port.

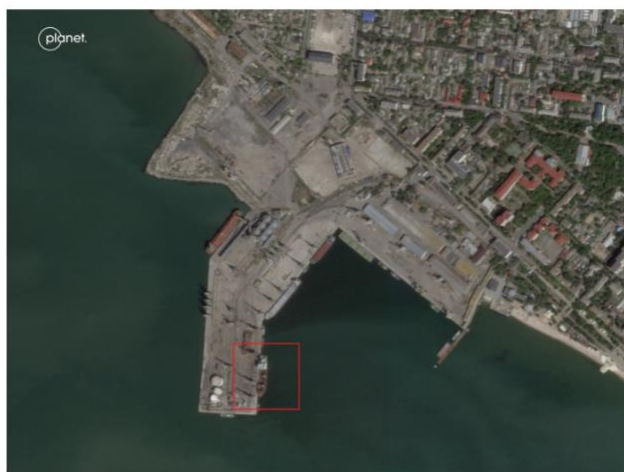
There are many reasons for a vessel to not transmit an AIS position, some of which are legitimate, but the deliberate disabling of AIS without legitimate cause is considered a deceptive shipping practice.

Comments from local officials and a review of satellite imagery suggest the port is operational and has regular turnover.

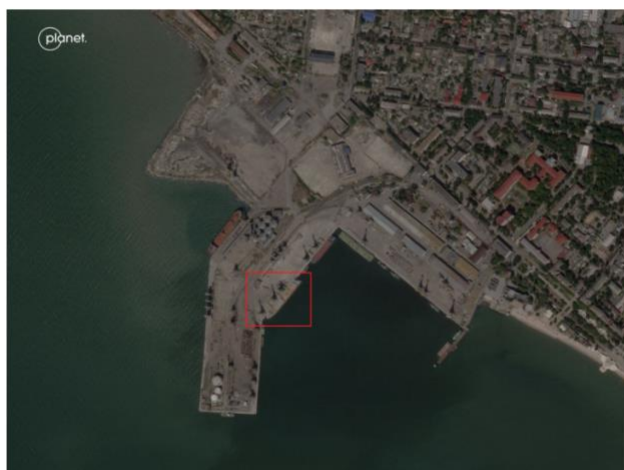
Berdiansk

Suspected export of agricultural products highlighted

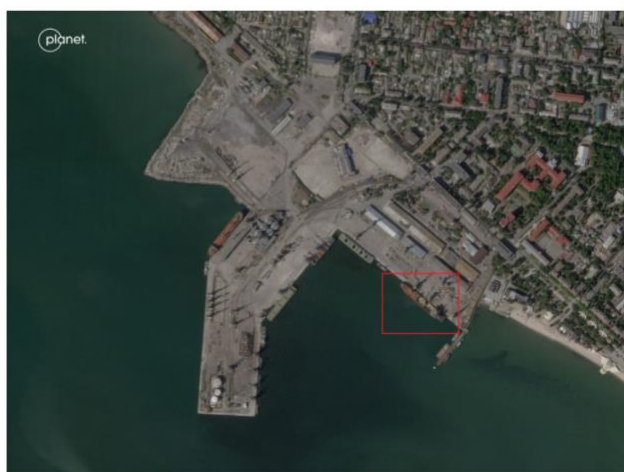
August 6, 2023



August 12, 2023



August 17, 2023



Source: Planet Labs PBC

“The Berdiansk Commercial Sea Port, despite all the difficulties, is functioning, dry cargo ships with grain leave its docks, it was possible to maintain and increase the professional staff of the enterprise, large-scale transformations are planned,” said Yevgeny Balitsky, the self-proclaimed governor of the Zaporizhzhia Oblast, on his Telegram channel at the beginning of July.

“Thanks to the support of the Government of the Russian Federation, the Berdiansk Commercial Sea Port is waiting for significant work to modernize the enterprise, improve the logistics infrastructure, [and] develop international relations and trade corridors.”

Balitsky said the Zaporizhzhia region is ready to export grain and other products to African countries, some of whom expressed interest.

Intel from Ukraine’s secret service supports evidence that Berdiansk is in regular use.

On August 9 the SSU sentenced the head of the Berdiansk port, who has yet to be arrested, for “facilitating the looting of Ukrainian grain.”

The SSU claims 150,000 tonnes of wheat, worth over \$30m, has been exported from Berdiansk to Russia since June 2022.

General cargoships Zhibek Zholy (IMO: 9598880), which was previously detained in Türkiye after Ukraine officials claimed it was carrying stolen wheat, and Sormovskiy 48 (IMO: 8226428) were named for their involvement.

Sormovskiy 48 shut off its AIS while in the Kerch Strait twice since the start of the year. It has not transmitted an AIS position since March 24.

Russia’s ministry of agriculture has begun factoring the harvest of the “new regions of Russia” into their federal forecast.

Dmitry Patrushev, Russia’s agriculture minister, told reporters at the St Petersburg International Economic Forum in June that the estimated grain harvest in the occupied territories this year would amount to 3m tonnes.

At the same conference he said the ports of Mariupol and Berdiansk are the “main channels for transporting crop products from new regions”.

Both ports have the capacity to export some 500,000 tonnes of grain each year.

There is the potential to increase the turnover at Mariupol to 2m tonnes and 1.5m tonnes at Berdiansk if restoration works are carried out, said the agriculture ministry.

The current sanctions only impact traders with links to the EU, US and UK jurisdictions. Their focus is not on supply of goods to third countries.

HFW’s Martin said: “The EU and UK prohibitions relating to goods which originate in the specific territories (as well as the supply of other goods and services to those territories) are targeted primarily at restricting the supply of goods to and from the EU and UK respectively.”

But he added: “If it becomes apparent that Russia is benefitting from exports from the ports and the existing sanctions measures are not effective to prevent those exports, then new action may be considered.”

The complexity of the supply chain means more sweeping measures would be necessary to address grain trade out of new territories. Whether Western governments have the appetite for this is a different question.

“Western governments are being cautious,” said Işık.

“They do not want to play into Russia’s false narrative that the US, EU or UK are preventing the Russians from engaging in agricultural commodities trade or hampering world food security through their sanctions. The issue is therefore covered broadly in other sanctions programmes, or in the case of the US targeting individuals of the acting administrations.”

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Title: UN urged to evacuate ships and crews stuck in Ukraine

Link: <https://www.loydslist.com/LL1144030/UN-urged-to-evacuate-ships-and-crews-stuck-in-Ukraine>

THE International Chamber of Shipping has joined over 30 shipping organisations and companies in signing an open letter to United Nations secretary-general Antonio Guterres calling for the swift evacuation of the seafarers and ships that have been trapped in Ukraine for nearly a year.

“Our seafarers are the heart of our industry and cannot be forgotten,” the letter says.

There are 331 seafarers on board 62 ships stranded in Ukraine’s Black Sea and Sea of Azov ports, according to ICS estimates.

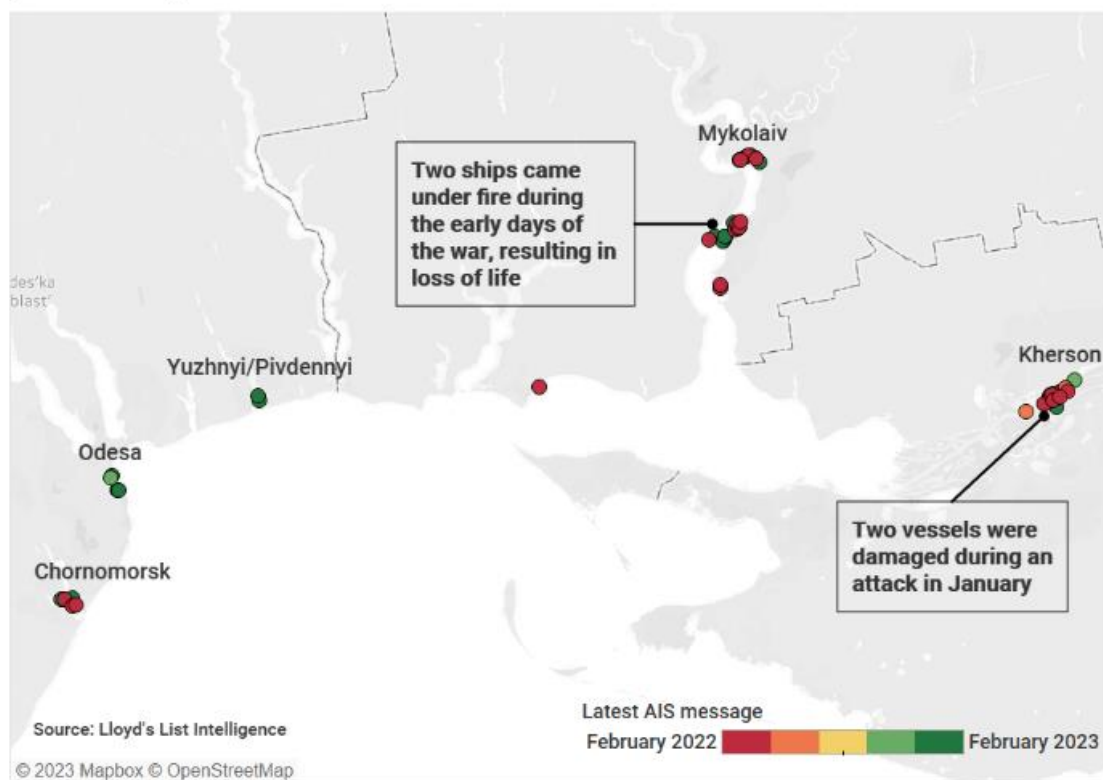
“For 12 months now they have been caught up in a crisis far beyond their control. Simply doing their jobs cannot come at the expense of their lives.”

Of the ships that remain in Ukrainian seaports, five have been damaged during hostilities, according to Lloyd’s List Intelligence casualty records.

Although most of these incidents occurred during the first few months of the war, stranded vessels are continuously at risk of being caught in the crossfire.

General cargoships Ferahnaz (IMO: 9071636) and Tuzla (IMO: 7920364), for example, were hit during an attack on Kherson on January 24.

Most of the vessels that remain stranded in Ukraine are berthed in the ports of Mykolaiv and Kherson



When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 there were 112 ships with more than 2,000 seafarers berthed in Ukrainian ports.

Repatriation operations have significantly reduced the number of crew on ships.

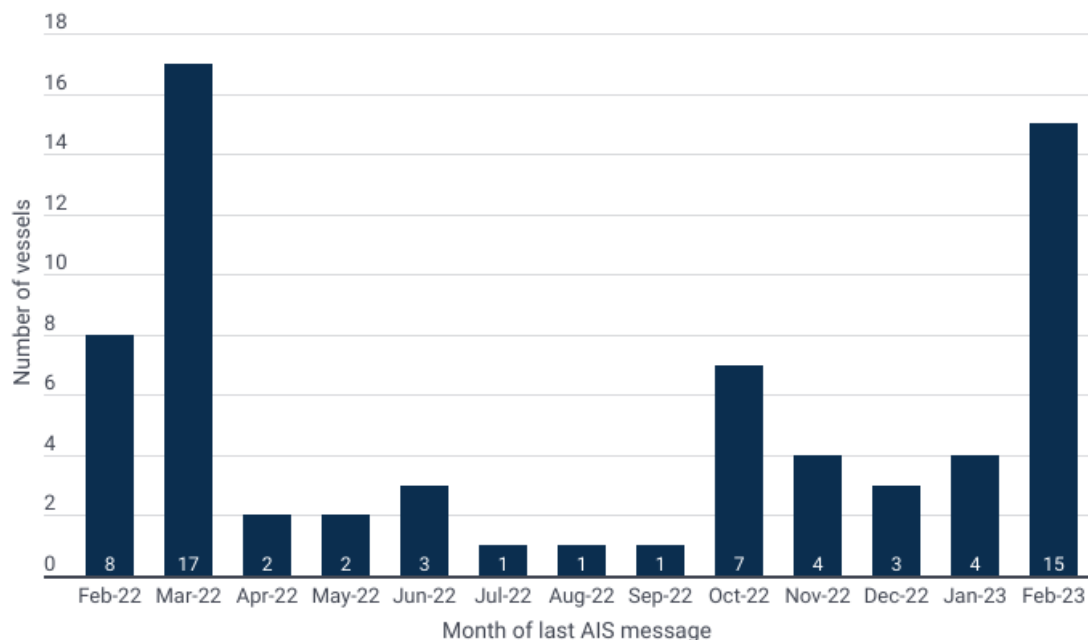
A minimum number of seafarers are needed on board stranded ships for the purposes of maintenance. There have also been reports of members of crew staying with ships in the event the vessel is given the opportunity to sail.

Automatic identification system messages from Lloyd's List Intelligence suggests there could be upwards of 68 commercial ships stuck in Ukraine.

The Marine Transport Workers' Union of Ukraine — the local affiliate of the International Transport Workers' Federation — continues to be available to assist foreign seafarers who are interested in signing off, as long as they are not located in occupied territories.

It is difficult to get an accurate figure given many ships have shut off their automatic identification system at various points over the past year.

Vessels stranded in Ukraine have been turning their AIS on and off throughout the war



Source: Lloyd's List Intelligence



Most of the trapped ships are foreign-flagged bulk carriers and general cargoships.

There are some vessels, such as containership Joseph Schulte (IMO: 9605243), which are stuck in ports that are operating under the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Only vessels that are eligible to carry grains are allowed to travel as part of the maritime corridor.

Many ships are stuck in the Black Sea ports of Mykolaiv and Kherson. These ports are not part of the grain deal, and proximity to military operations makes any travel dangerous.

“While there are challenges to evacuating seafarers and their ships, it must nonetheless be a top priority,” the letter says. “Otherwise, we risk the lives of our seafarers, and this is unacceptable.”

Other signatories include the European Community Shipowners' Associations, BIMCO, dry bulk shipowners' group Intercargo, the International Union of Marine Insurance, Intertanko, Japan's K Line, and the UK Chamber of Shipping.

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Title: Blacklisted Russian and Iranian ships: trading patterns and partners revealed

Link: <https://www.loydslist.com/LL1144431/Blacklisted-Russian-and-Iranian-ships-trading-patterns-and-partners-revealed>

HUNDREDS of merchant ships have been targeted under Russia- and Iran-related sanctions programmes — but these measures alone do not have the power to make vessels obsolete. Data analysis shows that these sanctioned ships continue to engage in global trade.

Lloyd's List has conducted analysis using vessel-tracking data from Lloyd's List Intelligence, focusing on Automatic Identification System messages and gaps, to understand how these blacklisted vessels continue to trade — and with whom.

The five ships sanctioned in relation to Russia's occupation of Crimea — product tankers Sudak (IMO: 8943155) and Sig (IMO: 9735335), chemical tanker Stalingrad (IMO: 9690212), and combined chemical and oil tankers Marshal Zhukov (IMO: 9690224) and Yaz (IMO: 9735323) — have been sanctioned for several years and have well-defined voyage patterns.

Sig and Yaz, for example, only travel between Russia-controlled areas in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov down to the Mediterranean Sea, going dark on the approach to Cyprus.

"These ships are working for Russian armed forces or other Russian government contractors," said Yörük Işık, a geopolitical analyst from the Istanbul-based consultancy Bosphorus Observer.

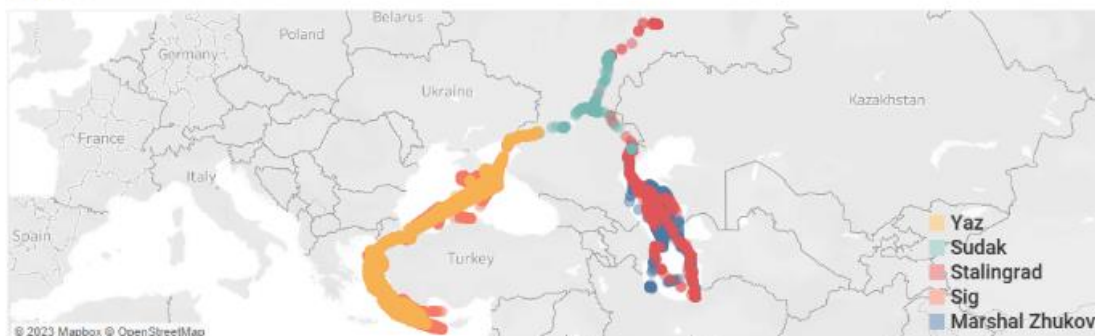
"The trade route was established years ago. One ship almost always travels to Latakia, where the Russian airbase is located, carrying jet fuel. The other is going to Tartus, most likely with diesel and benzene on board."

The pair exclusively work from the Feodosiia oil terminal located in Crimea.

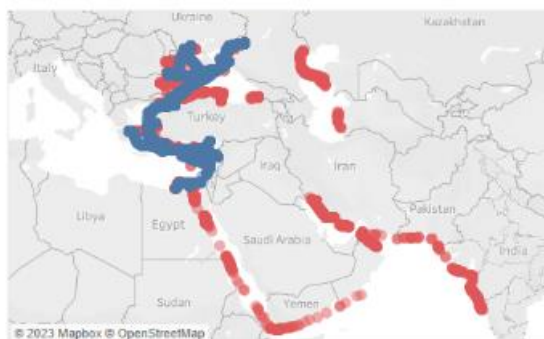
"Not only are these ships sanctioned themselves, but the company that owns them is sanctioned, all their routes are sanctioned, and they are technically trading stolen petroleum from an unlawfully seized property of the Ukrainian government," said Mr Işık.

Routes of vessels sanctioned in relation to Crimea programme Comparison with pre-sanctioned activity

2022



2016



2019



Source: Lloyd's List Intelligence



Stalingrad and Marshal Zhukov had more varied travel routes in the period before being sanctioned, with vessel-tracking data showing the ships calling in Europe, Egypt and Türkiye.

The pair have now retreated to focus on trade within the Volga-Don River system and Caspian Sea, reflecting a broader supply chain shift.

The North-South Transport corridor has emerged as a critical connection for Russia's post-war economy.

The development of maritime trade in relation to the corridor has been a priority for Russia and Iran for years, but 2022 saw further investment and efforts to improve the supply chain.

"While there is suspicious activity happening with Iran, there is also a legitimate trade route through the Caspian Sea that is booming," said Mr Işık.

"India is now shifting its trade through Iran and towards Russia via the Caspian Sea. It makes sense that the sanctioned ships are deployed here because of the new business."

The Caspian Sea is a hotspot for other sanctioned vessels — those targeted in programmes relating to both Iran and Russia — and it is common for vessels to operate off the radar when trading in the region.

Vessels blacklisted under Iranian schemes — all general cargoships — recorded nearly 530 AIS gaps in the Caspian Sea in 2022, and 483 in 2021.

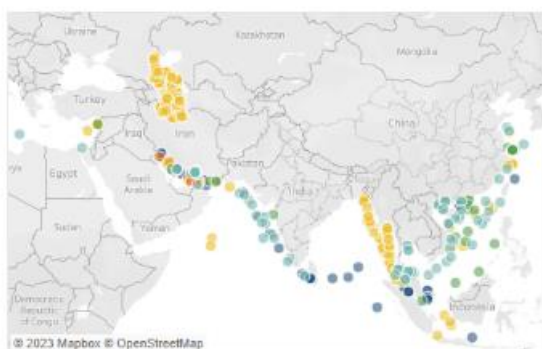
Ships sanctioned because of activity relating to Crimea have recorded elevated AIS gaps since 2020. In that year, there were approximately 20 AIS gaps, with this figure rising to 60 in the following years.

Sanctioned ships: starting locations of AIS gaps (2022)

Russia



Iran



Crimea



Sanctioned vessels certainly prefer to operate off the radar and obfuscate their movements, with no calling data recorded for about 20% of the vessels blacklisted under designated Iranian and Russian programmes.

However, many ships under sanctioned status are trackable at certain points in their voyages and call at ports with their AIS on.

Some 72 ships were directly sanctioned by the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, known as Ofac, at various points in 2022 under the executive order 12024, which blocks property with respect to "specified harmful foreign activities of the government of the Russian Federation".

These ships made more than 1,100 on-the-radar port calls in 2022 while sanctioned, most of which were local.

Still, since being blacklisted, Russia's sanctioned ships have berthed at ports in 28 foreign countries, sailing most often to Türkiye, India, Iran and Egypt.

The countries that accept blacklisted ships are ones that remain friendly to Russia, despite its invasion of Ukraine.

Türkiye has helped offset the loss of some of Russia's Western trading partners more broadly, with economic ties strengthening significantly between the two countries throughout the course of the war.

India has remained on good terms with Moscow and its businesses are taking advantage of circumstances to pick up discounted Russian commodities, but there are other reasons sanctioned ships sail to Indian waters.

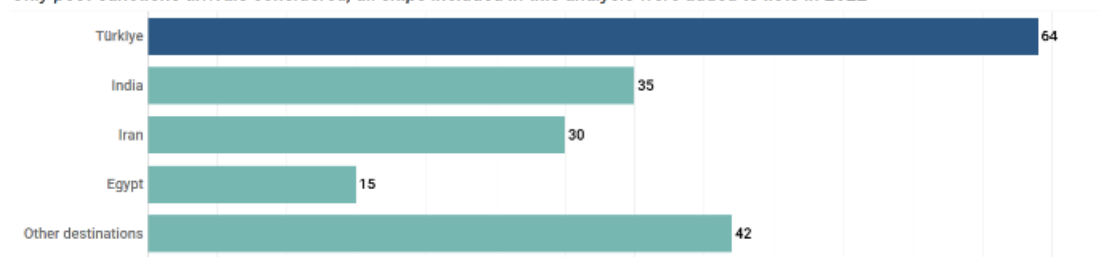
"The sanctioned vessels are some of Russia's best vessels," said Mr Işık.

"There is regular trade to India, but Russia also sells lots of weapons to India, so these vessels are involved in carrying very valuable defence exports."

The fleet of general cargoships engaged by the Russian government participates both in military operations and commercial activities.

Foreign port calls, vessels blacklisted in relation to Russia programmes

Only post-sanctions arrivals considered, all ships included in this analysis were added to lists in 2022



Source: Lloyd's List Intelligence



Sanctions measures levied by Western governments did successfully cut off these Russian ships from certain markets in Europe, Scandinavia and North America, which accounted for 34% of their port calls in 2021.

No ships have been tracked going to ports in these regions since they were added to sanctions lists.

The exception is the ro-ro Baltic Leader (IMO: 9220639), which arrived at the French port of Boulogne-sur-Mer on February 26, 2022.

The ship was intercepted and escorted there by the French navy under suspicion of belonging to a Russian bank subject to EU sanctions.

The Russia-flagged ro-ro was moved to Dunkirk in August 2022 and set sail in January of this year.

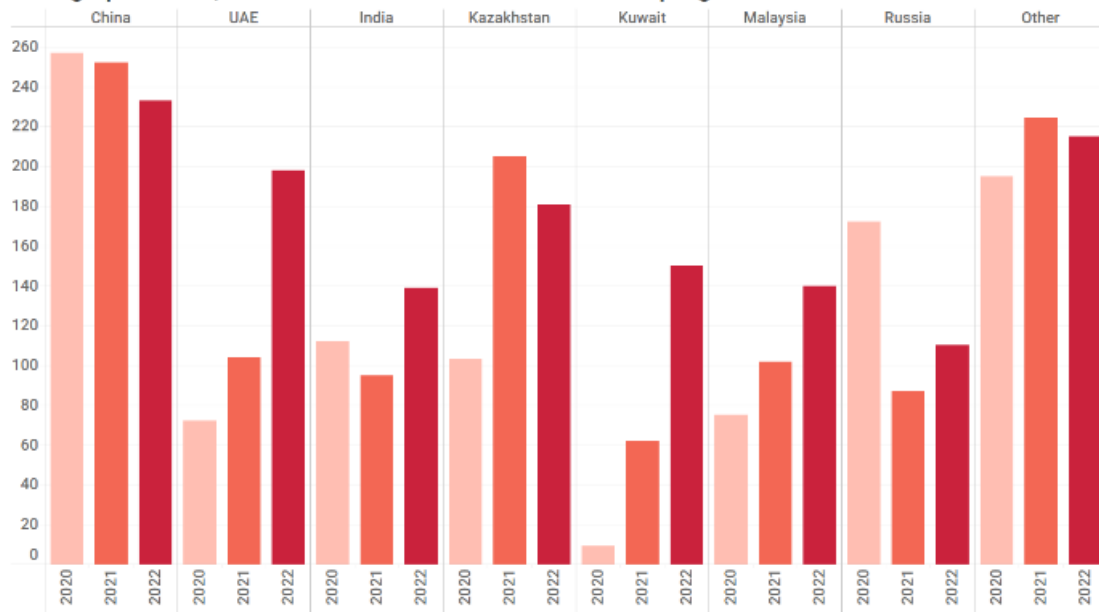
Sanctions regimes can sometimes also have an impact on markets further afield.

In July 2022, Bangladesh allowed sanctioned ro-ro Ascalon (IMO: 9198226) to berth in Chittagong, about two months after it was sanctioned by Ofac. The vessel then continued on to India.

However, when Russian state-owned general cargoship Ursa Major (IMO: 9538892) attempted to berth in Chittagong in December 2022, delivering equipment to a nuclear power plant, the vessel was denied entry due to US diplomatic pressure.

The Bangladesh government later said it would not accept certain Russian ships in line with US and European sanctions.

Foreign port calls, vessels sanctioned in relation to Iran programmes



Source: Lloyd's List Intelligence



Many vessels blacklisted under exclusive Iran programmes have been sanctioned for several years. Their trading relationships are well established, but activity still fluctuates and evolves annually.

Neighbouring countries and other Asian destinations remain popular. In 2022, there were 256 on-the-radar calls to the United Arab Emirates, 233 to China and 181 to Kazakhstan.

Notably, there was significant growth in the volume of traffic going to the UAE in 2022. This was driven by a jump in calls made by general cargoships, with a more modest increase in bulk carrier, boxship and ro-ro arrivals.

Improved relations between Iran and the UAE are likely contributing to this shift, with Tehran and Riyadh announcing a normalisation in relations at the beginning of March 2023.

“Saudi Arabia has established diplomatic relations with Iran again, and the UAE always leads the way there. The UAE and Saudis are pretty coordinated in this fashion, which could explain the increase in traffic,” said Mr Işık.

China, to which the most arrivals of sanctioned Iranian vessels were tracked since 2020, saw a 7.5% drop in on-the-radar activity year on year, driven by fewer calls by bulk carriers and crude oil tankers.

“China’s demand of Iranian oil did not change in 2022,” said US monitoring group United Against Nuclear Iran chief of staff Claire Jungman. “If anything, we saw more Iranian oil exported there.”

While fewer on-the-radar port calls are being made by Iran’s sanctioned oil tankers, there has been an increase in AIS gaps on the route running through the Singapore Strait.

According to Lloyd’s List Intelligence vessel-tracking data, there were 63 AIS gaps associated with blacklisted Iranian crude oil tankers, up from 27 in 2021.

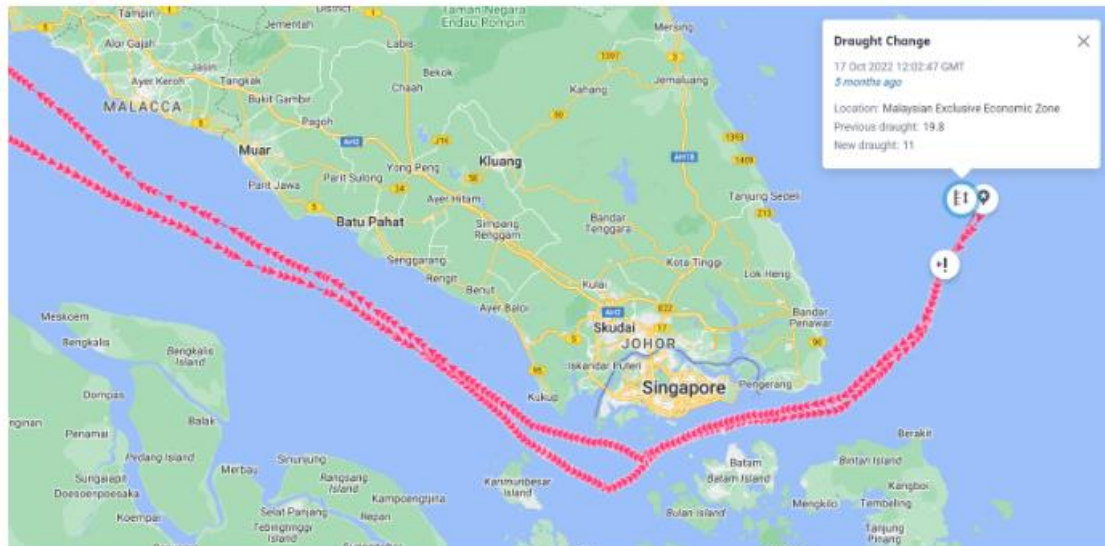
“We are seeing more AIS gaps in the Singapore Strait and more dark ship-to-ship transfers occurring in the area,” said Ms Jungman.

“I believe this increase in STS transfers from sanctioned tankers to non-sanctioned tankers allows more exports of Iranian oil and is more efficient for Iran because they do not have to go all the way to China.”

Very large crude carriers are travelling to the area that is northeast of Singapore. STS transfers take place with either suezmaxes or aframaxs. The tankers then head back to Iran and repeat the process.

VLCC Hero II (IMO: 9362073) had been operating in the dark since 2020 but showed up again in August 2022 and appears to be engaged in this practice.

Crude oil tanker *Hero II* travels from the Gulf of Oman, largely with its AIS off, appears during the transit of the Singapore Strait and goes dark. The vessel logs a draught change when it reappears before heading back the way it came



Source: Lloyd's List Intelligence / Seasearcher



Containerships sanctioned for links to the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines had a busy 2022, carrying out 388 port calls, up from 323 in 2021 and 353 in 2020.

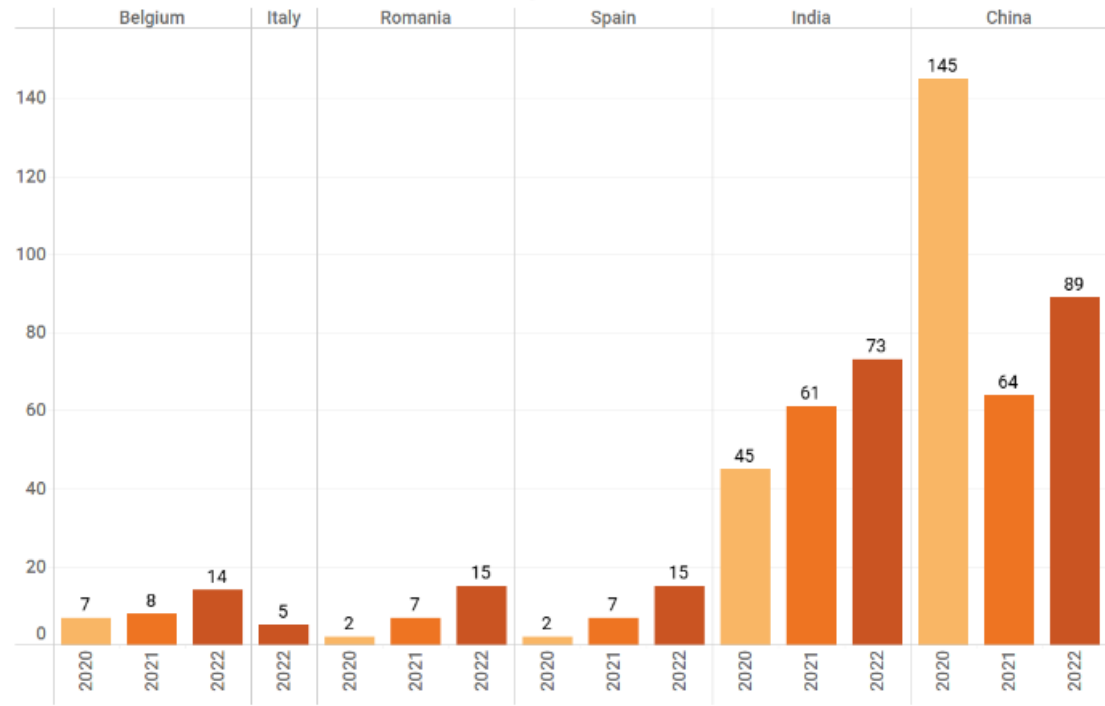
There was an increase in sailings to India and the UAE, but also an uptick in sailings to European countries.

Arrivals to Romania and Spain doubled, while Italy's port of Ravenna recorded five callings. It is the first time Iran's sanctioned ships have been tracked going to Italy in the past three years.

Sailings to Europe are part of a service route that often involves calls to Latakia, Syria and Haydarpasa, Türkiye.

"With IRISL containerships — even in the most difficult days of Iran — the traffic never stops to places such as Constanta, Antwerp and Valencia," said Mr Işık.

Port calls of Iranian sanctioned boxships, select destinations



Source: Lloyd's List Intelligence



It is difficult to assess the success of sanctions. In each case, it depends on the rationale behind the measures and the intended outcome of such restrictions.

However, the direct sanctioning of ships does not prevent these vessels from trading — or even doing so on an international scale.